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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6761  
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
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E.O.12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [CG](#) [UNESCO](#)  
SUBJECT: VERDICT DELIVERED IN JOURNALIST ASSASSINATION TRIAL

REF: A) 07 Kinshasa 451; B) 07 Kinshasa ---

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Fourteen months after the death of independent journalist Bapuwa Mwamba, a military court returned a guilty verdict against the accused murderers. This is the second conviction in the death of a journalist in the past five months. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) On August 24 a military tribunal in Kinshasa sentenced Vungu Mbembo, Nkunku Makuala and Mangwene Lowayi to death on charges of criminal conspiracy, possession of illegal weapons and ammunition, armed robbery, extortion and second-degree murder. Mwamba was killed in his home on July 8, 2006. Suami Sumbu, a fourth suspect, received a twenty-year sentence for possession of an illegal weapon. The court established that Sumbu had supplied one of the guns used to kill Mwamba to Mbembo, who masterminded the attack.

[1](#)3. (U) The military tribunal sentenced those convicted and the Congolese government to pay damages ranging from \$50,000 to \$900,000 to Mwamba's family. The Congolese government was judged in absentia for failing to prevent traffic in illegal weapons and failing to fulfill its obligation to protect citizens.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Comment: This is the second conviction in the death of a journalist this year. The conviction of Mwamba's killers follows the April 13 conviction of the killers of Franck Ngyke Kangundu and his wife Helene Paka. While these high profile cases show motivation to deter further crime directed toward the press, the commitment of judicial authorities to prosecuting these crimes is tenuous and partial. Achieving such commitment would require judicial reform and government support for more aggressive prosecution of crimes directed toward the press. End comment.

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